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Meeting the President's Challenge to End Extreme Poverty

"We also know that progress in the most impoverished parts of our world enriches us all—not only because it creates new markets, more stable order in certain regions of the world, but also because it's the right thing to do. In many places, people live on little more than a dollar a day. So the United States will join with our allies to eradicate such extreme poverty in the next two decades by connecting more people to the global economy; by empowering women; by giving our young and brightest minds new opportunities to serve, and helping communities to feed, and power, and educate themselves; by saving the world's children from preventable deaths; and by realizing the promise of an AIDS-free generation, which is within our reach."

– President Obama, 2013 [State of the Union](#) address

In his State of the Union address this week, President Obama laid out a challenge for our generation to eradicate the scourge of extreme poverty. We are advancing this critical agenda through Feed the Future, the President's signature global hunger and food security initiative. Here, we examine how.

"A little more than a dollar a day..." By standard definition, this means less than \$1.25 a day. That won't buy a latte, let alone a healthy lunch here in the United States. Hunger and poverty are inextricably linked. Through Feed the Future, we're working to achieve the President's vision to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger in our lifetime. This is our generation's legacy to leave. And reducing poverty is more than just a [goal](#): It's achievable, and we are already seeing results.

Since 2009, Feed the Future has supported agriculture-led growth in 19 focus countries, with investments that will lift 20 percent of the people in our targeted areas out of poverty in three years. Agricultural growth is an incredibly effective way to fight poverty – 75 percent of the world's poor live in rural areas in developing countries, where most people's livelihoods rely directly on agriculture, and studies show that growth in the agricultural sector has up to three times greater impact on poverty reduction than growth in other sectors.

And Feed the Future is showing results. We have improved farmers' access to key technologies that we know transform their lives, increasing yields and incomes. In 2011 alone, we helped nearly 2 million food producers adopt improved technologies and practices to improve their yields, and our efforts to integrate agriculture and nutrition mean that healthier harvests can also mean [better market opportunities](#).

We're strategically targeting our investments in [countries](#) where our support can have the greatest impact. We're aligning our investments behind food security and nutrition priorities our partner countries have identified, and we're helping foster the growth and accountability required to ensure that this impact lasts. And because we know we don't have all the answers to reducing global poverty, we're taking a rigorous approach to figuring out what works best, so we can do more of it. We're identifying gaps in evidence and [working to fill them](#). We're engaging with global leaders, top scientists, business leaders, and communities to [share what we learn](#) so that we can beat hunger and poverty together.

"By connecting more people to the global economy..." Feed the Future supports countries in developing their own agriculture sectors to generate opportunities for economic growth and trade. We place particular emphasis on empowering [smallholder farmers](#) with the tools and technologies they need to produce more robust harvests and have better opportunities to participate in markets and earn better incomes.

Smallholder farmers are the key to unlocking agricultural growth and transforming economies. In supporting them, we're also helping build tomorrow's markets and trade partners, [connecting smallholder farmers](#) in rural areas to local, regional and global markets.

"By empowering women..." At the heart of our strategy is an understanding that investments in women reduce poverty

and promote global stability. Take for example our [horticulture project in Kenya](#), which is working with smallholder farmers, many of whom are women, to not only grow more nutritious crops to eat and sell, but to also diversify into growing higher value crops, like flowers. Higher value crops help these farmers increase their income, which in turn provides them with more money to pay for school fees for their children, medicine, and quality food. We're also tracking [women's empowerment in agriculture](#) and the impact our programs have on increasing it.

"By giving our young and brightest minds new opportunities to serve..." We're helping [train the next generation](#) of agricultural leaders through our [programs and opportunities](#) to support agricultural higher education. Through the African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) fellowship program, we're helping strengthen the research and leadership skills of African women in agricultural science. AWARD will announce the next round of fellowship recipients [next week](#).

We are cultivating a collective global commitment to take root so that hunger, poverty, and undernutrition are no longer obstacles to shared prosperity and growth. In addition to supporting [capacity development](#) by providing training opportunities for students and farmers in partner countries, Feed the Future also provides opportunities for Americans to get involved. We work with the Peace Corps to [better equip](#) its Volunteers and their counterparts to address food security needs in our focus countries. Peace Corps Volunteers are [helping extend](#) Feed the Future to a greater number of food-insecure households.

"By helping communities to feed, power and educate themselves..." Our work to reduce poverty means more families will be able to pay for things like sufficient nutritious food, education, and healthcare. And we're helping to build more [resilient](#), healthy communities equipped with the knowledge, tools and environment needed to thrive in times of prosperity and overcome difficulties in times of hardship.

"By saving the world's children from preventable deaths..." We've [already reached](#) 9 million children through Feed the Future nutrition programs, which help prevent and treat undernutrition and improve [child survival](#). Strong nutrition—particularly in the critical 1,000 days from pregnancy to a child's second birthday—contributes to economic growth and poverty reduction by helping to produce a robust, capable workforce.

"And by realizing the promise of an AIDS-free generation..." We are helping [transform the lives](#) of people living with HIV/AIDS by empowering women, creating economic opportunities in agriculture, and providing nutrition education. Feed the Future's work deliberately intersects with other this and [other global priorities](#) in order to ensure lasting impact for a better future for all.

Why do all this? As the President said, it's the right thing to do. It's also the smart thing to do.

When others prosper, we prosper as well. As we've seen over time and as the President pointed out, progress against extreme poverty helps create a more stable and secure world. By helping reduce global poverty and create economic opportunities, our collaborative food security efforts generate economic growth and global stability, which ultimately benefits us all and creates a healthier, happier world.

By remaining committed to not only doing what's right, but to doing the right things well, our generation can end extreme poverty and leave a legacy of shared progress and prosperity.

Why is ending extreme poverty important to you? Let us know on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#)!

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